

Cultural Daily

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Gustavo Arellano: 'Nothing's Off Limits!'

Adam Leipzig · Thursday, October 4th, 2012

Gustavo Arellano writes the nationally syndicated [Ask a Mexican](#) column, is the editor of the [OC Weekly](#), and is the author of [Taco USA: How Mexican Food Conquered America](#).

We spoke on the day the *OC Weekly*, along with a dozen other papers, was sold to new ownership, extricating them from an association with Backpage.com, which has been implicated in sex trafficking. "Now that we're away from Backpage, we can sell more ads, so I get to keep my job!" Gustavo quipped.

Adam Leipzig: You write a lot about St Jude. Do you have a current lost cause?

Gustavo Arellano: My lost cause is truth and good journalism. No one cares for truth or good journalism any more. I'm a reporter here in Orange County. We're severely lacking in both.

AL: You've been writing Ask a Mexican since 2004, and more than 2 million people read it now. Why do you think it's so popular?

GA: I'd prefer to call it more notorious. Some people may not like it, but they keep reading it. Mexicans are all across the United States now. We're no longer Southern California's problem – we're America's problem, and people are going to be curious and have questions about Mexicans. With the immigration debate, professional pundits are all way too respectful – I call them *PC pendejos*. They're fire-breathing know-nothings. People like my approach about the Mexican question, which is satirical yet truthful.

Nothing's off-limits. I've answered everything from XXX-rated questions to the most saintly of topics.



*AL: Nick Kristoff recently wrote in the New York Times about the Mideast riots and asked "Should we curb the freedom to insult religions that are twitchy?" He cited *Piss Christ* and *Book of Mormon* as creative works that offend some, but don't cause them to riot.*

GA: As a reporter, I would not publish an image of the Prophet Mohammed unless there was a point to it.

During the Prophet Mohammed cartoon scandal, in 2006, all the conservatives were saying "You've got to publish the images! You've got to stand in solidarity with them [the Danish magazine]!" I wasn't the editor at the time, but our response was, "No, there's no Orange County connection."

But we finally did print a portrait of the Prophet Mohammed, and it was an ugly, ugly caricature of him, because it was the cover to a book by this crazy OC pastor. We published it. Did Muslims go crazy? No – they didn't like it, because it goes against their religion, but they said, "We understand why you're doing it." Did conservatives give us credit for being so courageous? Of course not! It's

all opportunistic politics.

I'm a firm believer in free speech. But at the same time, as a reporter, you don't want to be gratuitous. Every story you do needs to make a point.

AL: Let's stay with politics for a moment. Do you think if the Republicans put Marco Rubio up for national office, or some other well-spoken, handsome Latino, even though they keep using the word "Hispanic," do you think they could get the Latino vote?

GA: There will always be some people who will vote for a candidate just because they have the same ethnicity. But Rubio is a Cuban, and the majority of Latinos are either Mexican or Mexican-American, and we know where that type of whack-job, right-wing Republican Cuban comes from, so there's no way on earth we'll vote for him.

But if you got someone like Bob Menendez, the moderate senator from New Jersey who is for the Dream Act, that's someone Mexicans would vote for because he's a good politician.

AL: The Kennedy Center Honors were recently taken to task because they've only honored two Latinos in their entire 35-year history. Who would you nominate?

GA: Aw jeez, they usually give those awards when someone's irrelevant or about to die! I don't want to give this as a death-wish to anyone... Can we modify the awards to be for vibrant, living people?

There are so many! "Flaco" Jiménez, Cheech Marin, Edward James Olmos, not just because he's a great actor, but because he's also a humanitarian wizard. Really, there are so many people to honor!

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